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Message Text

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R 211731Z MAY 75
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY (TOSEC)
TOSEC PARTY FOR SONNENFELDT

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR, XO, US, UK
SUBJECT: U.S. - UK TALKS ON INDIAN OCEAN

REF: STATE 85901

SUMMARY. MAY 19 - 20 INDIAN OCEAN CONSULTATIONS PROVIDED COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF POLITICO-MILITARY ISSUES IN THE AREA. BRITISH WERE APPRECIATIVE OF U.S. BRIEFING ON SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN NORTHWESTERN PORTION OF OCEAN AND SUGGESTED U.S./UK MIGHT GAIN BY SOME PUBLICITY OF THOSE ACTIVITIES. UK FOCUSED ON ARMS LIMITATION QUESTION; THEY SAID THEY MAY HAVE TO STRENGTHEN THEIR PUBLIC POSITION CALLING FOR U.S. - USSR DISCUSSIONS IF PARLIAMENTARY PRESSURE GROWS. BRITISH DESCRIBED THEIR PLANS FOR WITHDRAWAL OF MILITARY PRESENCE FROM THE AREA. THIS WILL BE COMPLETED BY APRIL 1976. END SUMMARY.

1. U.S./UK SEMI-ANNUAL CONSULTATION WAS HELD IN LONDON MAY 19 - 20. JOHN THOMSON OF FCO LED BRITISH DELEGATION. OTHER IMPORTANT HMG REPRESENTATIVES WERE J.E. JACKSON (FCO), J. EDMONDS (FCO), COMMODORE B. PEROWNE
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(MOD), B. ROBSON (RAF), R. EWANS (FCO) AND B. WHITE OF CABINET OFFICE ASSESSMENTS STAFF.

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2. MEETING BEGAN WITH AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE NORTHWESTERN PORTION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN GIVEN BY CDR. J. PATTON OF USDEL. HE DESCRIBED RECENT SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN BERBERA WHICH INDICATE THAT THEY SEEM TO BE CONSTRUCTING A MAJOR NAVAL SUPPORT FACILITY. U.S. REPRESENTATIVES STATED THAT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SCHLESSINGER HAS ALLUDED TO THE SOMALIA DEVELOPMENTS IN A GENERAL WAY IN AN INTERVIEW IN NEWSWEEK AND MAY DECIDE TO RELEASE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME IN THE FUTURE. JOHN THOMSON SUGGESTED THAT THE UK AND U.S. MIGHT COOPERATE IN THE EXPLOITATION OF SUCH MATERIAL. A WORKING GROUP FROM BOTH DELEGATIONS WAS APPOINTED TO FORMULATE PROPOSALS.REPORT BY SEPTEL.

3. THE GROUP ALSO DISCUSSED CHINESE AND FRENCH ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA AND, AT REQUEST OF BRITISH SIDE, COVERED RECENT PERSIAN GULF DEVELOPMENTS. THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT CHINESE INTEREST IS MINIMAL. THE REASONS BEHIND THE RECENT INCREASE IN FRENCH ACTIVITY WERE CONSIDERED AND BOTH SIDES AGREED FRENCH MOTIVES ARE OBSCURE. THE MAIN POINT IS THAT THE FRENCH PROBABLY WISH TO HAVE AN INFLUENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A PLAYER OF ALMOST THE SAME STATURE AS THE U.S. AND USSR. THERE WAS (U.S. DELEGATION LED) AN INFORMAL EXCHANGE ON ACTIVITIES IN THE GULF. THE GROUP DISCUSSED THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE IRAN/IRAQ RAPPROCHEMENT, THE STATUS OF U.S. FACILITIES IN BAHRAIN AND SOVIET FACILITIES IN IRAQ. IT WAS AGREED THAT NEITHER THE U.S. NOR THE USSR APPEARS TO BE IN DANGER OF LOSING ACCESS IN THE AREA IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

4. THOMSON ASKED FOR A REPORT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S. ON ARMS LIMITATION. VEST REPORTED THAT WASHINGTON HAS DECIDED THAT (A) IN THE LIGHT OF THE INDOCHINA SITUATION THE TIMING IS NOT RIGHT TO RUSH INTO INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITATION DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SOVIETS AT THIS TIME, (B) THE U.S. WISHES TO DECOUPLE THE ISSUES OF DIEGO GARCIA AND INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITATION INSOFAR AS POSSIBLE AND (C) THE U.S. WILL GO AHEAD WITH DIEGO
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GARCIA AND WOULD SUBMIT THE PRESIDENTIAL JUSTIFICATION TO THE CONGRESS. THE LATTER STEP WAS TAKEN ON MAY 12. VEST SAID THAT THE SECRETARY HAS COMMISSIONED HIS STAFF TO STUDY HOW ARMS LIMITATION TALKS MIGHT PROCEED. IMPORTANT THING IS THAT QUESTION HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY CONSIDERED AT HIGHEST LEVEL IN USG. WHAT WE MUST SAY IS THAT ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT MAKE A COMMITMENT TO PURSUE DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIETS AT THIS TIME, BRITISH SHOULD NOT FEEL THAT WE HAVE REJECTED THEIR REQUEST FOR FORWARD MOVEMENT.

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5. THOMSON SAID THAT HMG IS UNDER CONTINUOUS PRESSURE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED SECRETARY'S PARTY

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TO SHOW THAT THE QUESTION OF INDIAN OCEAN ARMS LIMITA-
TATION IS NOT DORMANT; THAT THERE ARE DEVELOPMENTS. IN
THAT LIGHT HMG WOULD LIKE TO POINT TO PRESENT CONSUL-
TATIONS AS A PART OF U.S./UK DISCUSSION ON THE ISSUE AND
SPECIFICALLY WOULD LIKE TO USE FOLLOWING FORM OF WORDS
IF REQUIRED -- PROBABLY IN ANSWER TO A PARLIAMENTARY
QUESTION:

"AS MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND THE PRIME MINISTER
SAID IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM MY HONOURABLE
FRIEND THE MEMBER FOR ENFIELD, EDMONTON (MR.
GRAHAM) ON 13 JANUARY, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT
SUPPORT MR. WHITLAM'S CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSAL FOR
ARMS LIMITATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. ACCORDINGLY,
WE HAVE TOLD THE AMERICANS THAT WE WOULD FAVOUR
CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THEM AND THE RUSSAINS
ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RESTRAINT

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IN THE INDIAN OCEAN, ON THE LINES SUGGESTED BY
THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER
TOLD MR. BREZHNEV OF OUR SUPPORT FOR THESE PRO-
POSALS DURING HIS VISIT TO MOSCOW IN FEBRUARY.
WE HOPE THAT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED WILL BE
ABLE TO START DISCUSSIONS ACCORDINGLY, SINCE ANY
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REALISTIC ARMS LIMITATION MEASURES IN THE INDIAN
OCEAN WOULD CLEARLY REQUIRE THEIR SUPPORT."

VEST SAID HE WOULD REFER PROPOSED BRITISH STATEMENT TO
WASHINGTON FOR STUDY AND WOULD COMMENT THROUGH DIPLOMATIC
CHANNELS.

6. THOMSON FELT THAT HMG CAN STAND ON PRESENT POSITION
OF SAYING AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE FOR TIME BEING. IT IS
SENSIBLE TO ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT UK WILL NOT GET THROUGH
ALL OF 1975 ON THIS POSITION. IT MAY COME TO THE POINT
WHERE IT WOULD BE WISE FOR THE UK TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF
MORE CLOSELY WITH THE WHITLAM POSITION. FCO IS WORRIED
THAT SOME OF THE COMMONWEALTH NATIONS OF THE AREA MAY
INVITE UK TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS ON THE SUBLECT.
IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR HMG TO REFUSE SUCH AN INVITA-
TION.

7. COMMODORE PEROWNE SAID THAT THERE MAY BE REQUESTS
FOR VISITS BY MP'S TO DIEGO GARCIA. IF A VISIT BY U.S.
CONGRESSMEN OCCURS, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO INCLUDE A FEW
MP'S. VEST RESPONDED THAT WE HOPE THERE WILL BE NO
VISITS UNTIL 60 DAY PERIOD FOR CONGRESSIONAL CONSIDER-
ATION OF JUSTIFICATION IS COMPLETE. AFTER THAT TIME WE
MIGHT BE WILLING TO CONSIDER SUCH VISITS.

8. UK DEFENSE REVIEW IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIAN OCEAN WERE
DISCUSSED. MAIN POINT WAS THAT ALMOST ALL UK FORCES
WILL BE WITHDRAWN BY APRIL 1976. ON MAURITIUS, UK
BELIEVES INDIA IS MOST LIKELY CANDIDATE TO PROVIDE GOM
WITH OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES THRG
THROUGH TRAINING, EQUIPMENT SUPPLY, ETC. RAMGOOLAM HAS
BEEN TOTALLY COOPERATIVE WITH BRITISH ON LATTER'S DESIRE
TO TERMINATE UK/GOM DEFENSE AGREEMENT AND UK MILITARY
PRESENCE. REGARDING GAN, BRITISH SAID THEY ARE NEGOTI-
ATING FOR SMOOTH WITHDRAWAL, BUT SITUATION COMPLICATED
BY FACT THAT MALDIVE PRESIDENT IS PRESSING UK TO KEEP
SUBSIDIZING EMPLOYMENT OF 1,000 MALDIVIAN LABORERS AT
GAN. REGARDLESS OF OUTCOME THESE NEGOTIATIONS, RAF WILL
LEAVE GAN IN APRIL 1976. BRITISH CONTINUE TO BELIEVE
BEST SOLUTION FOR CONTINUED U.S./UK USE OF SINGAPORE
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WOULD BE FOR UK TO LEASE FUEL TANKS AND TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF GOS OFFER TO GIVE PRIORITY TO U.S. AND UK SHIPS AT
TWO BERTHS IN HARBOR.

9. ON SIMONSTOWN, JACKSON REPORTED THAT DISCUSSIONS HAD
BEGUN WHICH WILL ALLOW TERMINATION OF FORMAL UK/SAG
AGREEMENT BUT LEAVE UK FREE TO USE FACILITIES ON A
CUSTOMER BASIS WITH NO SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP. IN DIS-
CUSSION OF OMAN AND MASIRAH, THOMSON SAID THAT UK WILL
REMAIN AS LONG AS DHOFAR REBELLION CONTINUES; NO END IS
YET IN SIGHT. HE SAID THAT UK PROBLEMS WERE INCREASED
BY RECENT PUBLIC REFERENCES TO MASIRAH. FURTHER REF-
ERENCES (TO U.S. USE?) COULD CAUSE EVEN GREATER PROB-
LEMS.

10. BRITISH GAVE COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ON MARCH 1975
CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS WITH MANCHAM AND RENE OF SEYCHELLES.
INDEPENDENCE IS NOW SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 1976. WE DIS-
CUSSED MANCHAM VISIT TO U.S. AND HIS REQUESTS FOR QUID
PRO QUO FOR CONTINUED OPERATION OF U.S. TRACKING STATION.

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BOTH DELEGATIONS NOTED THAT QUESTION OF BIOT ISLANDS HAD BEEN RAISED BY RENE AND (DEFENSIVELY) BY MANCHAM. THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT U.S./UK COULD HOLD TO PRESENT POSITIONS ON ISLANDS UNTIL NEXT INDIAN OCEAN CONSULTATIONS. BY THAT TIME WE SHOULD HAVE STUDIED RANGE OF OPTIONS AND BE PREPARED TO AGREE ON AN APPROACH TO PROBLEM THAT WOULD OFFER AT LEAST SOME COMPENSATION (E.G. FISHING OR RESIDUAL MINERAL RIGHTS) TO MANCHAM IF IT WAS AGREED ISLANDS SHOULD BE RETAINED IN BIOT.

11. THOMSON SUMMARIZED MEETING AS FOLLOWS: (A) DEVELOPMENTS IN SOMALIA ARE VERY IMPORTANT AND NEED TO BE KEPT IN FOCUS. (B) LOCAL CONDITIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN SEEM NOW TO FAVOR THE WEST, BUT WE MUST WATCH FOR DANGER SPOTS -- SUCH AS THREATS TO GULF STABILITY. (C) ARAB/ ISRAELI EVENTS HAVE A MOST IMPORTANT IMPACT ON THE INDIAN OCEAN AND PERCEPTIONS OF LITTORAL NATIONS. (D) WE SHOULD MONITOR THE CONTINUED FRENCH PRESENCE IN DJIBOUTI. (E) U.S. SHOULD NOT COUNT ON INDEFINITE ACCESS TO BAHRAIN. (F) PDRY IS NOT LIKELY TO BECOME ANOTHER SOMALIA. (G) WE SHOULD TAKE STEPS TO PUBLICIZE SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN SOMALIA -- AND PERHAPS IN THE SEYCHELLES. (H) WE SHOULD TASK OURSELVES TO PREPARE OPTIONS FOR
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HANDLING THE SEYCHELLES BIOT PROBLEM.

12. VEST HAS NOT SEEN THIS REPORT. DEPARTMENT REQUESTED TO REPEAT TO OTHER ADDRESSEES AS DESIRED.

RICHARDSON

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